Challenge 25 of 40

Reflection by Lisa Clark Diller - Chattanooga, USA

This weekend was full of Advent holiday responsibilities—and a few extras thrown in. It was one of those times in the Christmas season where I looked around and thought “How am I supposed to celebrate and spend time in thoughtful reflection about Jesus’ life and Incarnation when there is no time to stop?” It was a Sabbath where my responsibilities and celebrations required me to change clothes three times—which is a big indication that I’m having to concentrate more on logistics than Sabbath rest.

Into this moment, on this Sabbath, God reminded me about Mark 2, where Jesus both says that the “Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath” and “The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” What was it that Jesus came to do? What is He Lord of? And as my Lord, what does He ask of me? I think Isaiah gives us a great picture of how the ministry of Jesus, the Sabbath, and the call He gives to His followers are all linked.

Isaiah 58 and 61 have always been special chapters for me, and they were some of the ones from the Old Testament that we most associate with Jesus—and the Sabbath. Isaiah 58 asks us to see the Sabbath as God’s fast, centered on justice and letting the oppressed go free. Isaiah 61, which Jesus read on a Sabbath during the worship service, also reveals the fast that he wants: a releasing of prisoners, a ministry to those who grieve and are poor.
I know that I need Sabbath rest, and I think we are all called to sink back into the rest and joy of the Sabbath. But on this weekend, on this Sabbath, God reminded me that sometimes the Sabbath justice and work that I’m called to do are also a celebration of Jesus’ lordship and ministry. Providing childcare so weary parents can enjoy the sermon, helping organize a funeral, being part of a potluck for the homeless ministry, supporting my students in the vespers they planned—all of these things are part of proclaiming freedom and the good news. I can be part of Jesus’ Isaiah 61 celebration of the gospel, even in my busyness.

Sabbath rest and Sabbath justice sometimes seem in tension with each other. Sometimes I am the person who is receiving the ministry and rest of the Sabbath. Sometimes I am working with Jesus to provide rest and ministry for others. Sometimes I give the sermon and sometimes I listen to it. I need to receive as well as give. “If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed…. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail” (Isaiah 58: 10,11). Even in the busy Christmas holiday round.

Recalibrate

1) In this season of your life, do you need Sabbath rest or Sabbath justice more? When have you been able to receive Sabbath ministry or rest rather than be the minister?

2) How well does Isaiah 58 describe the Sabbath fast of your life? What challenges do you have with pursuing the call to set the oppressed free? How might such work promote the rest and celebration that the Sabbath requires of us?
My Dream - Manny Arteaga

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